

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LIBREV 00449 291309Z

41

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 /014 W
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R 291100Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
TO USDOC WASHDC
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 6255

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BEXP, GB
SUBJ: GRAND POUBARA - VISIT OF GERALD BLANC OF CHARLES T.
MAIN

REF: STATE 60677

1. SUMMARY. ALTHOUGH BLANC HAD BAD LUCK AND WAS UNABLE TO SEE EITHER PRESIDENT BONGO OR MINISTER OF MINES MBOUY-BOUTZIT, HIS VISIT SUCCESSFUL AND MAIN APPEARS TO HAVE CHANCE TO OBTAIN GRAND POUBARA JOB. END SUMMARY.

2. GERALD BLANC, CHARLES T. MAIN, VISIT LIBREVILLE FROM MARCH 18 TO 26 IN ORDER TO MEET WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND DISUCSS GRAND POUBARA DAM PROJECT. UNFORTUNATELY, SERIES OF UNRELATED CIRCUMSTANCES (VISIT OF TOGOLESE PRESIDENT EYADEMA, DEATH OF KING FAISAL, EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING) PREVENTED BLANC FROM MEETING PRESIDENT BONGO OR MBOUY-BOUTZIT. HOWEVER, HE DID MEET WITH MINISTER OF STATE FOR ECONOMIC COORDINATION RAWIRI (ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE) AND TWICE WITH SECGEN TF SEEG, GABONESE ELECTRICITY COMPANY. BLANC, WHO IS PERHAPS PERFECT AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN FOR GABON (NATURALIZED AMERICAN, BORN IN FRANCE, THUS SPEAKS FLUENT FRENCH AND CANNOT BE ACCUSED OF NATIONAL PREJUDICE IF HE SAYS FRENCH FIRM CANNOT DO JOB), GAVE EXCELLENT PRESENTATION TO RAWIRI AND SLIDE PRESENTATION TO SEEG. TOW POINTS STRESSED BY BLANC WERE THAT CONTRACT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO COMPANY THAT COULD SEE PROJECT THROUGH FROM
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BEGINNING TO END (FROM DESIGN TO DELIVERY OF ELECTRICITY)

AND THAT IF FRENCH DID FEASIBILITY STUDY IT WOULD BE
DIFFICULT TO FIND AMERICAN FIRM TO DO DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
SINCE FRENCH COMPETITORS WOULD LIKELY ALREADY HAVE INFO
AND SPECS WOULD BE DIFFERENT.

3. BLANC'S MESSAGE APPARENTLY HAD IMPACT. ALTHOUGH HE
DID NOT SEE BONGO, BONGO HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN BRIEFED BY
RAWIRI, FOR DURING MEETING WITH SEEG, SEC GEN TOLD BLANC
THAT BONGO HAD CALLED HIM WITH SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR BLANC:
COULD MAIN REALLY SEE PROJECT THROUGH FROM BEGINNING TO
END? PRESUMABLY, EVEN THOUGH HE DID NOT SEE PRESIDENT
BLANC'S POSITIVE ANSWER GOT BACK TO HIM.

4. IN LIGHT OF ABOVE, DOUBLY UNFORTUNATE THAT BLANC
DID NOT SEE PRESIDENT. HOWEVER, AS SOPHISTICATED
AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN, HE ALREADY MAKING PLANS TO RETURN
AT END OF HIS CURRENT AFRICAN TRIP, PROBABLY FIRST PART
OF APRIL.

5. FYI. FRENCH FIRM DOING FEASIBILITY STUDY (REFTEL) IS EDF
(ELECTRICITE DE FRANCE), THE FRENCH NATIONAL ELECTRICAL COMPANY,
END FYI. COUNTRYMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LIBREV00449
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750110-0634
From: LIBREVILLE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975034/aaaaadhp.tel
Line Count: 83
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 60677
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 AUG 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <26 AUG 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GRAND POUBARA - VISIT OF GERALD BLANC OF CHARLES T. MAIN
TAGS: BEXP, GB
To: COM
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006